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COMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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S E C R E T SAIGON 418

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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REF: STATE 1238

1. WE ARE CONTINUING TO SEEK MORE PRECISE INFOMATION ON THE TERMS OF THE THIEU-KY AGREEMENT. IN ADDITION TO THE VARIOUS MESSAGES REPORTING THOSE ACCOUNTS NOW AVAILABLE OF THE JUNE 28-30 MEETINGS, OUR PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE EVENT IS CONTAINED IN SAIGON 344.

2. SINCE 344 WAS DRAFTED WE HAVE] SOME FURTHER COMMENT FROM GENERAL NGUYEN DUC THANG. BOTH THANG AND GENERAL CAO VAN VIEN] SAY THAT THE SPECIFIC TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT HAVE NOT BEEN SET OUT. VIEN BELIEVES THAT THE AGREEMENT WILL GIVE KY THE REAL POWER, AND THIEU WILL CONTINUE TO EXERCISE THE LIMITED POWER HE NOW HAS IN THE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE. THANG INDICATED, HOWEVER, THAT KY IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE LACK OF PRECISION IN THE AGREEMENT WITH THIEU, AND HE SAID THAT KY IS MEETING INDIVIDUALLY WITH CORPS COMMANDERS TODAY (JULY 6) IN AN EFFORT TO NAIL DOWN WHAT HE REGARDS AS THEIR DEBTS TO HIM. AT THE SAME TIME, AT LEAST ONE OF THIEU'S SUPPORTERS IS INTERPRETING THE THIEU-KY TICKET AS A CLEAR VICTORY BY THIEU.

3. REFTEL RAISES QUESTION OF HOW WIDESPREAD KNOWLEDGE AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE THIEU-KY AGREEMENT IS WITHIN THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. WE HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT VERY FEW OFFICERS HAVE ANY EXACT KNOWLEDGE OF THE AGREEMENT; WE ALSO BELIEVE ON THE BASIS OF INFORMATION WE NOW HAVE THAT THE QUESTION OF ACCEPTANCE IS STILL VERY MUCH UP IN THE AIR, WITH VIERY FEW OF

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REVIEWED BY [illegible] DATE 1/7/31
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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THE CONCERNED OFFICERS HAVING HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO EVALUATE THE SITUATION FULLY IN TERMS OF THEIR OWN INTERESTS AND POSITIONS. KY'S MEETING WITH THE CORPS COMMANDERS TODAY IS REPORTEDLY IN PART DIRECTED TOWARD THE QUESTION OF THEIR FUTURE ROLE, THE IMPLICATION BEING THAT HE WOULD BE THE ONE PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH THIS QUESTION.

4. THE AGREEMENT HAVING EVIDENTLY BEEN MADE IN RATHER GENERAL TERMS, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT IT IS NOW SUBJECT TO FURTHER NEGOTIATION AND / OR DEFINITION BY ACTUAL PRACTICE. SOME HINT OF MANEUVERS IN THIS SENSE MAY BE READ IN RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY THIEU TO THE EFFECT THAT THE QUESTION OF "SACRIFICE" APPLIES ONLY TO THE SOLDIERS WHO ARE FIGHTING A CLEAR JAB AT THE LINE KY IS TAKING IN PUBLIC ABOUT HIS SACRIFICE FOR THE NATION.

5. ON THE QUESITON OF BIG MINH, WE STILL BELIEVE THAT HIS RETURN AND HIS CANDIDACY FOR THE PRESIDENCY THREATEN A RENEWAL OF DANGEROUS DIVISIONS WITH THE MILITARY. MOREOVER, IF ELECTED, BIG MINH IS UNLIKELY TO PROVIDE THE KING OF LEADERSHIP THAT IS NEEDED AT THIS TIME. HE PROVED INCAPABLE OF UNITING THE MILITARY AND THE NATION IN 1963-64 WHEN HE WAS AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS POPULARITY.

6. THIEU AND KY ARE CLEARLY WORRIED ABOUT BIG MINH'S CANDIDACY, AND WE HAVE REPORTS THAT THEY ARE TRYING TO FIND WAYS OF PREVENTING NOT ONLY HIS RETURN BUT ALSO OF BARRING HIM FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE. [redacted] JULY 6 TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT THEIU AND KY ON JULY 5 HELD A LONG DISCUSSION ON THE LEGAL ASPECTS OF BIG MINH'S CANDIDACY. THEY CONCLUDED THAT THERE IS NO LEGAL WAY TO BAR BIG MINH FROM RUNNING, AND THE QUESTION OF WHAT TO DO ABOUT HIS CANDIDACY WAS LEFT UNRESOLVED. OBSERVED THAT MUCH DEPENDS ON HOW FAR ONE CAN STRETCH THE MATTER OF SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS.

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7. THE CURRENT VIEWS OF THIEU AND KY ON THE SUBJECT OF BIG MINH'S RETURN APPEARED PUBLICLY IN THEIR STATEMENTS ON THE EVENING OF JULY 5 WHEN THEY COMMENTED TO THE PRESS ON THIS SUBJECT DURING A RECEPTION MARKING THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY

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OF THE PEOPLES ARMY COUNCIL. THE PRESS QUOTED KY AS SAYING "THE RETURN OF GENERAL MINH IS IMPOSSIBLE AT THIS TIME" WHILE THIEU REPORTEDLY SAID MINH'S RETURN IS "OUT OF THE QUESTION BECAUSE THE DECISION OF THE ARMED FORCES COUNCIL TO PREVENT HIM FROM RETURNING AT THIS TIME STILL STANDS." THEY SAID NOTHING ABOUT HIS CANDIDACY, BUT THEIR CONTINUED STAND AGAINST HIS RETURN WILL BE INTERPRETED BY VIRTUALLY ALL VIETNAMESE AS OPPOSITION TO HIS CANDIDACY.

8. WE HAVE INADEQUATE INFORMATION NOW BUT WE BELIEVE THAT OTHER SENIOR OFFICERS GENERALLY AGREE WITH THE THIEU-KY POSITION ON BIG MINH. WE ALSO KNOW THAT ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL CIVILIAN CANDIDATES, PHAN KHAC SUU, IS OPPOSED TO MINH'S CANDIDACY. SINCE THE OPPOSITION TO MINH'S CANDIDACY APPEARS TO BE RATHER GENERAL AMONG THE MILITARY, AND SINCE AMONG THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES SUU AT LEAST SHARES THEIR VIEW, WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO BAR MINH'S RETURN.

9. WE HAVE JUST LEARNED THAT GENERAL CAO VAN VIEN AND THE FOUR CORPS COMMANDERS FILED A COMPLAINT TODAY WITH THE CENTRAL ELECTION COUNCIL AGAINST THE CANDIDACY OF DUONG VAN MINH. WE DO NOT YET HAVE A TEXT BUT WE UNDERSTAND THE COMPLAINT IS BASED ON GROUNDS OF NATIONAL SECURITY. THIS OF COURSE IS A GOVERNMENT ATTEMPT TO BAR HIM AS A CANDIDATE AS WELL AS PREVENTING HIS RETURN.

10. IN ANY EVENT, WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT OUR INTERVENTION AT THIS STAGE WOULD NOT HELP MATTERS AND COULD PROVE EMBARRASSING. WE ARE THEREFORE STICKING TO OUR HANDS-OFF POLICY ON THIS MATTER. BUNKER

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NOTE: PASSED WHITE HOUSE July 6, 1967 9:20 a.m.
PASSED S-S/O July 6, 1967 8:56 a.m.

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